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BERLIN CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS - III

Report of Molotov-Eden dinner: Foreign Secretary Eden's report of his dinner on 27 January with Molotov provides a slightly clearer insight into the latter's views. Molotov appeared to be taking the line that there must be a continuing four-power control over Germany. In answering Eden's advocacy of free German elections, Molotov pointed out that Hitler came to power as a result of free elections and that therefore "the important thing was to decide what kind of government would result from elections before they took place."

Eden gained the impression that Molotov might consider a German army within the confines of EDC as less of a threat than an independent German national army. When Eden asked for some alternative to EDC, Molotov replied only, "That's an easy question to ask but a difficult one to answer."

In their discussions of the first agenda item, Eden urged that the five-power conference proposal be postponed until after discussions on Germany and Austria. Molotov, without taking a definite position, gave the impression that he was prepared to split the two parts of his proposal under the first agenda item.

This appears to be exactly what Molotov did at the conclusion of the 28 January meeting. His first agenda item included both "measures for easing tension in international relations" and the calling of a five-power conference. After apparently agreeing to postpone temporarily consideration of the five-power conference, Molotov made his proposal for a disarmament conference. It is clearly one of the "measures for easing tensions" and raises the possibility that Molotov may insist on protracted discussion of others, such as East-West trade, the threat of world-wide American bases, and even Asian issues such as the stalled Korean conference. In effect, Molotov is opening the way to discussion of the very issues that he has been insisting must be taken up by the five powers.

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Molotov's disarmament proposal: Although Molotov's proposal was confined to the question of armaments, it may have been presented in the hope that it will obscure and possibly replace the President's 8 December proposal for the peaceful development of atomic energy. The Kremlin may insist that a cessation of the arms race, and not the Presidents' plan, would best serve the easing of international tensions.

Moscow insisted in its answer to the Presidents' proposal that all atomic energy, and not "some small part," be turned to peaceful pursuits. Soviet propaganda maintains that the USSR has already made substantial progress in the peaceful development of its own resources.

The USSR made a similar proposal for a world-wide disarmament conference in the UN in 1951 when it also called for the participation of all states regardless of UN membership.

Additional East German preparations for conference: As a precautionary measure against demonstrations during the Berlin conference, guard services have been organized in all factories in East Berlin and East Germany. Effective 30 January, the approximate date of the beginning of talks in the Soviet embassy, additional night guards will be installed. Plain clothes security personnel are patrolling the streets of all major East German cities.

In the Soviet sector of Berlin all anti-American propaganda posters have disappeared, and slogans advocating a treaty and German participation in the conference have been put up. Food has appeared in unprecedented quantities in the state-owned stores and cooperatives of East Berlin at very low prices.

Soviet propaganda on Austria: Closely following Foreign Minister Molotov's opening statement, on 27 January a Soviet-controlled commentator, speaking on the "Russian Hour" in Vienna, described the issue at the Berlin conference as being a general relaxation of international tensions which would lead to a solution of the Austrian problem as well. He stated, however, that as long as there is no "genuine readiness for such relaxation of tensions on all sides, there would be no better chance for the conclusion of an Austrian state treaty."

Since "general relaxation of tensions" is the first item on the agenda, the USSR may intend to point to alleged Western intransigence on this concept as an excuse for delaying an Austrian treaty.

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